

The landmark 2019 project for the Historical Foundation will be raising the funds to complete the restoration of the Oyster Union Society Hall and to make considerable improvements to displays and accessibility. The work will include installing a new roof, adding a handicap accessible ramp, strengthening the second floor and rebuilding the stairs and handrails. The area around the building will be cleared and landscaped and there will be professional lighted displays inside the building telling the important story of the oyster harvesting and canning industry on Daufuskie Island. The building will be made accessible to tour groups and will be open to all visitors on special occasions.

In 1883, Maggioni & Co built a cannery on the island and hired local workers to harvest and shuck oysters. The cannery closed in 1903, but oysters continued to be harvested and shucked for canning in Savannah. A shucking factory was built on the island as well as a number of shucking shacks. None of these buildings remain today. Daufuskie Island oysters were considered a delicacy, were sold world-wide and reportedly enjoyed by the Tsar of Russia.

In the early 1900's the oyster workers organized themselves into benevolent societies that helped fellow workers in need and assisted families at the time of a death. The Oyster Union Society was the first such society open to both men and women and it was sometimes referred to as the Brothers & Sisters Oyster Union Society. In 1921 the Oyster Union Society purchased the 1880's vintage Chaplin home which was dismantled and reassembled at its present location on Hinson White Road. Society meetings were held in the building for 30 years until pollution from the Savannah River contaminated the island's oyster beds in the 1950's and the oyster industry on the island ended.

In 2002 the Daufuskie Island Historical Foundation purchased the deteriorated building that had been unoccupied for nearly 50 years. The Foundation completed the first phase of the stabilization and restoration of the structure in 2012.